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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Chairman:	Mr. ARELLANO (Vice-Chairman)	(Mexico)
later:	Mr. MONGBE (Chairman)	(Benin)

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In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Arellano (Mexico), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 98: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.24

1. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and the other sponsors, who had been joined by Poland, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.24 entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction", which had been drafted bearing in mind the responsibility of all nations to protect their people and their infrastructures of assets and services in the event of natural disasters. In that regard, the general trend towards the establishment of genuine disaster prevention mechanisms was a positive development. The objective of the draft resolution was to create public awareness of the effects of natural disasters and the type of assistance required in the event of such disasters. It also called for the convening of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in 1994, which the Government of Japan had generously offered to host. It also requested the secretariat of the Decade to serve as the secretariat of the Conference and to coordinate preparatory activities, and called for the active participation of the organs and organizations of the United Nations system.

2. Mr. HORIE (Japan), referring to the financial implications involved in holding the Conference, said that his country was prepared to bear all the necessary additional costs, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 40/243 of 18 December 1985. It also was prepared to provide the resources needed to facilitate the participation of the least developed countries in the Conference. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 105: STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND COORDINATION OF EFFORTS TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHERNOBYL DISASTER (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.19

3. Mr. MOJOUKHOV (Belarus) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.19 entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster" on behalf of the sponsors and pointed out amendments to the first and third preambular paragraphs. In the first preambular paragraph, the comma after "1990" should be replaced by the word "and" and the words "and 47/165 of 18 December 1992" should be deleted. In the third line of the third preambular paragraph, the words "and 47/165" should be deleted and the comma after "46/190" should be replaced by the word "and". The draft resolution was the result of discussions in the Second Committee and the plenary of the General Assembly concerning various aspects of the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 45/190 of 21 December 1990, 46/150 of 18 December 1991 and 47/165 of

(Mr. Mojoukhov, Belarus)

18 December 1992. The exchange of information called for in paragraph 2 had taken place on 17 November 1993 at the second coordination meeting of the ministers of Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine and the United Nations Coordinator of International Cooperation on Chernobyl. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted without a vote.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.21

4. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.21 entitled "Economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries". The Group of 77 viewed the use of coercive measures against a country or group of countries with deep concern. The draft resolution was aimed at the world-wide adoption of a non-discriminatory, open, economic and trading model, and therefore called upon the international community to find a way to eliminate the use of such unilateral measures.

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.22

5. Mr. MUCHANGA (Zambia), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Chad and Paraguay, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.22 entitled "Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of land-locked developing countries". He drew particular attention to paragraphs 9, 11, 13 and 14 in which changes had been made with respect to the resolution on the same item adopted by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. Annex III of the report of the Trade and Development Board contained the financial implications of the implementation of the draft resolution, and he hoped that, as in earlier years, the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.23

6. Mr. FARHADI (Afghanistan), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, who had been joined by Tajikistan and Turkey, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.23 entitled "Assistance to land-locked States in Central Asia and Transcaucasia". The five countries of Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) had become land-locked States upon the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Since their entire commercial transportation system had been part of the broad network of the Soviet Union, those countries now faced a very unique situation which merited special attention. Although there also were new countries which had become land-locked States, in Transcaucasia, their situation was very different from that of the countries of Central Asia and his delegation accordingly proposed that the draft resolution be amended by deleting the word "Transcaucasia" from the title, the second preambular paragraph and paragraph 1. He hoped that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 99: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

(b) GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.12

7. Mr. JARAMILLO (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/48/L.12 entitled "Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States" and said that paragraph 11 should be amended by deleting the words "Report of the" from the second line.

8. Mr. Mongbe (Benin) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 91: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued) (A/48/25, A/48/451 and Corr. 1, A/48/472-S/26108, A/48/552, A/C.2/48/2, A/C.2/48/6)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/48/216-E/1993/1992, A/48/552, A/C.2/48/6)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued) (A/48/8 and Add.1, A/48/37)

AGENDA ITEM 99: IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/48/182, A/48/291-S/26242, A/48/294-S/26247, A/48/309, A/48/338, A/48/359, A/48/401, A/48/427, A/48/484-S/26552, A/48/485, A/48/552, A/48/563, A/C.2/48/4, A/C.2/48/6)

(a) ELABORATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION IN THOSE COUNTRIES EXPERIENCING SERIOUS DROUGHT AND/OR DESERTIFICATION, PARTICULARLY IN AFRICA (continued) (A/48/226 and Add.1, A/48/564)

(b) GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES (continued) (A/48/36, A/48/564)

(c) SUSTAINABLE USE AND CONSERVATION OF THE MARINE LIVING RESOURCES OF THE HIGH SEAS: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON STRADDLING FISH STOCKS AND HIGHLY MIGRATORY FISH STOCKS (continued) (A/48/479)

9. Mr. SOH (Republic of Korea), after reviewing the progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and the international instruments prepared for the implementation of the UNCED agreements, referred to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and commended the Alliance of Small Island States for providing an extensive text which had served as a basis for deliberations. His delegation believed that, later deliberations should focus on the most crucial themes such as preservation of the precious resources that were unique

(Mr. Soh, Republic of Korea)

to small island States and capacity-building. The final document of the Conference should be based on Agenda 21 and should take into account related international processes so that the action plans contained in the document would be carried out effectively as part of the UNCED follow-up. His delegation hoped that the final document of the Conference would be completed at the forthcoming session of the Preparatory Committee.

10. With regard to the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification, his delegation believed that it was necessary to raise public awareness of the implications of desertification at the international level. It hoped that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would concentrate on the formulation of practical and action-oriented programmes. A financial mechanism must be developed that would be able to mobilize and utilize resources effectively; the mechanism should perhaps be operated on an interim basis by the restructured Global Environment Facility (GEF), until the Convention entered into force. Anti-desertification programmes and activities at the national and local levels should be given appropriate consideration so as to ensure that the Convention was applicable at the grass-roots level.

11. With regard to large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing, he said that the Republic of Korea had faithfully implemented the provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/215 and that as of 30 November 1992, it had completely suspended all large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing under the Fisheries Act, which had been amended on 23 March 1992 to empower the Government to take such action; 34 of the 139 drift-net fishing vessels had been scrapped and the remaining 105 vessels had been re-equipped for alternative fishing methods, even though the Republic of Korea, a country with a major fishing industry, had been greatly affected by the changes in global fishing regulations. His delegation reaffirmed the position it had expressed at the second session of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks that the issue should be considered within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Moreover, his delegation believed that conservation measures should be based upon cooperation among all fishing countries, whether coastal or distant, and in that respect shared the view of the Norwegian Government that the regulation of large-scale pelagic drift-netting should be undertaken by regional fisheries bodies and not by large international organizations.

12. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh), referring to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the other decisions taken at UNCED, said that the inadequacy of concrete actions, particularly in the area of financial resources and the transfer of technology, gave cause for concern; it had become evident that in order to protect the environment, the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment must be eliminated. Bangladesh hoped that the inter-sessional working groups of the Commission on Sustainable Development would carry out useful groundwork for the Commission's next session, and was encouraged by the adoption of the multi-year programme of work agreed upon by the Commission. With regard to financial resources, GEF could be an appropriate and effective mechanism to fund global environment programmes provided that its decision-making process was made democratic and transparent; for that purpose it needed to be restructured so

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

that developing countries had equal participation in its decision-making and day-to-day administration.

13. As a low-lying coastal State, Bangladesh was following with keen interest the preparatory process of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and hoped that the outcome of the Conference would reflect the real needs and concerns of those States and that its recommendations would be implemented in a timely manner.

14. Bangladesh attached great importance to the launching of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification; his delegation had already stressed the importance of taking steps to resolve outstanding problems of shared resources like rivers, lakes and grazing land on the basis of the principles of equity and fairness. It felt that special attention should be accorded to the implementation of provisions adapted to the specific needs of each region.

15. On the subject of human settlements, his delegation fully supported the objectives of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and believed that although the problem of providing shelter was universal, it had particular magnitude and scope in the developing world. The right to shelter was one of the fundamental rights of human beings and was related to problems of overcrowding, inadequate access to clean water and sanitation, the accumulation of uncollected waste and deteriorating air quality. The population of Bangladesh was extremely vulnerable to natural disasters and the Government was trying to do its utmost to provide shelter to the poorest section of the population; it was committed to providing safe and sustainable habitat to its population by the year 2000. Bangladesh also felt that new strategies were needed to stop the rapid deterioration of physical living conditions and that the efforts of developing countries should be supplemented by the mobilization of additional financial resources. In that respect, it noted that the cost-effective and affordable accommodation schemes using indigenous materials and techniques that had been adopted in many developing countries could be replicated in other countries through South-South cooperation, with the necessary support of the United Nations and international financial institutions.

16. Mr. AL-DOSARI (Bahrain) stressed the importance of the role of Agenda 21, and said that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) had marked the beginning of a new era of interest in environmental issues. Bahrain itself was making every effort to preserve the environment.

17. In recent years, and as a result of the two wars that had been fought there, the Gulf region had been affected by many problems requiring special attention, particularly in view of the considerable activity and the heavy maritime traffic which were characteristic of the region. Marine life had also suffered serious harm, and there was a need for increased investments aimed at protecting the water resources of the region. Bahrain had signed several regional agreements dealing with those issues, it had also enacted legislation to protect the environment and increased the sanctions imposed on those who

(Mr. Al-Dosari, Bahrain)

violated the environmental laws. Nevertheless, technical assistance from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the competent regional and international organizations would be required in order to address the threats to the environment. His Government wished to request that UNEP should conduct an assessment of the long-term environmental implications of the war for the health of the inhabitants of the region. A detailed study should also be made of the support that had been provided by national and international agencies.

18. Bahrain had followed with interest the work of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held from 30 August to 10 September 1993, and hoped that when it met again in March 1994, the Committee would be able to lay the foundations for the Conference. It was to be hoped that all participating States would arrive at the meeting with a clear idea of the position they wished to take. A concerted effort should be made at that time to draw up plans and programmes on the sustainable development of small island developing countries and on how their marine resources might be utilized in order to preserve their biological diversity and improve the standards of living of their populations.

19. Mr. SWETJA (Indonesia) said that the Commission on Sustainable Development had a very important role to play in promoting sustainable development in all countries and in monitoring the implementation of the commitments made at Rio. The adoption of a multi-year thematic programme of work would enable the Commission to focus its deliberations on each and every cross-sectoral and sectoral issue of Agenda 21, for the purpose of reviewing its implementation in 1997. The ability to implement Agenda 21 and the other decisions adopted at Rio would differ from country to country. The developing countries would need new and additional financial resources if they were to meet their obligations in that regard. If they were to successfully achieve sustainable development, they would need to acquire environmentally sound technology and develop their own economic, technical and managerial skills. Some encouraging steps had already been registered, such as the establishment of the ad hoc working groups on finance and technology, which would benefit greatly from the advice of the High-level Advisory Board on Sustainable Development. Coordination and cooperation among programmes, agencies and organizations of the United Nations system was of critical importance, and they must receive adequate support from the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development in their efforts to enhance the capacity of the developing countries to coordinate international assistance and formulate and implement national sustainable development strategies and plans.

20. The Barbados Conference would provide one of the first opportunities to implement the commitments made in Rio. As an archipelagic State, Indonesia well understood the problems of the small island developing States, and trusted that the Conference would adopt a programme of action to support the sustainable development of those States, as well as measures to help them cope with adverse environmental changes. In that regard, his delegation noted with regret that the Preparatory Committee had been unable to complete all its tasks at its second session. If the successful outcome and the smooth conduct of the Barbados Conference was to be ensured, it was important that all parties should

(Mr. Swetja, Indonesia)

build upon the spirit of Rio as well as renew their commitment to implementing Agenda 21. Only in that way could agreement be reached on the programme of action and the Barbados declaration. For that purpose, his delegation believed that the Preparatory Committee should hold an additional session in order to allow Governments sufficient time to work on those two draft documents.

21. His delegation was pleased to note the progress achieved by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification. Experience had shown that desertification was a multifaceted problem resulting from various factors, including climatic variations and human activities. The task, therefore, was not only to achieve agreement on a set of practices and conditions so that the utilization of lands did not lead to degradation, but also to develop and strengthen integrated development programmes to tackle the socio-economic causes of desertification, namely, poverty, backwardness and rapid population growth.

22. The sustainable use and conservation of marine living resources of the high seas was a matter of concern to all nations, and required effective conservation and management solutions. It was important that the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks should continue to seek lasting and practical solutions, and his delegation supported the proposal to convene two additional sessions in 1994.

23. He wished to stress the need to ensure the full participation of all countries, especially the developing countries, in the deliberations on all Agenda 21 follow-up activities. The voluntary fund had a significant role to play in that regard; also, it was extremely important to avoid conflicting scheduling of meetings.

24. Mr. RAKOTONAIVO (Madagascar) said that his delegation had taken note of the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 with regard to institutional arrangements, creation of the Commission on Sustainable Development and its advisory bodies and the establishment of appropriate coordination mechanisms. It had also noted the relatively satisfactory results of the negotiations aimed at elaborating instruments and international programmes in the areas of drought and desertification, sustainable development of small island developing States and of straddling fish stocks and highly migratory fish stocks. The first substantive session of the Commission had marked the beginning of an important stage in the activities to follow up the Rio Conference. His delegation attached great importance to implementation of the multi-year thematic programme of work of the Commission, which should be carried out with strict respect for the principles of the Rio Declaration and bearing in mind all the social and economic dimensions of Agenda 21. His delegation endorsed the views expressed by the Group of 77 with regard to the need for broad dissemination of those principles in order to allow for a better understanding of the interests that were at stake, to facilitate decision-making, and to promote the application of concrete measures. The issues raised were complex and interrelated, and called for an integrated approach and sustained efforts in order to ensure coordination and cooperation between the various agencies of the United Nations system and the international organizations, including the regional and international

(Mr. Rakotonaivo, Madagascar)

financial institutions. In that regard, his delegation would be following with interest the evolution of relations between UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank.

25. Madagascar was prepared to cooperate and to share its experience in coordinating national programmes intended to achieve the goals of Agenda 21 and to exchange information on the subject. The Government of Madagascar was aware of the seriousness of the environmental problems of the country and had worked out a national conservation strategy and prepared, with the help of the World Bank, a plan of action for the environment based on sustainable development which would complement the economic and social structural adjustment programmes. Although that plan had the financial support of a group of donors, other forms of international cooperation were needed to strengthen the country's capacity for action, particularly with regard to the human dimension of development, as a policy of sustainable development would be undertaken ensuring the participation of the population and the defence of its interests, especially the most vulnerable social groups. The debt cancellation agreement related to nature conservation activities entered into with the World Environment Fund had had limited results.

26. The difficulties confronting the developing countries with respect to the environment and development were great, and for that reason the financing of sustainable development, together with technology transfer, was the key to the success of Agenda 21. The hesitations and delays of the bilateral and multilateral donors in allocating additional resources to the relevant funds and programmes were therefore unfortunate. His delegation accordingly welcomed the establishment of the two inter-sessional special working groups on financing and technology transfer as well as the initiatives taken by some countries within the framework of the preparatory consultations, and hoped those groups would be able to make innovative and practical recommendations. It also hoped that the negotiations on the repositioning of resources and the restructuring of the World Environment Fund would be completed quickly and that the Cartagena negotiations would lead to a greater democratization of the decision-making machinery as well as a considerable increase in resources, in accordance with the principles laid down by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

27. How effectively Agenda 21 would be implemented depended on the establishment of an international system promoting cooperation on an integrated approach to the great economic and social issues facing the developing countries: the elimination of poverty, debt reduction, the liberalization of international trade and the effects of the structural adjustment programmes. It was to be hoped that the spirit of political compromise, cooperation and willingness to act which had governed the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development could be maintained.

28. Mr. AHMIA (Algeria) said that desertification was a vast phenomenon of the destruction of ecosystems and biological potential which affected the most disadvantaged regions and peoples and was not limited to any one continent, although it was worst in Africa, where more than 40 countries were affected and more than 60 million hectares of land were irremediably lost each year and another 21 million hectares damaged. In spite of the efforts made by the

(Mr. Ahmia, Algeria)

African countries to combat desertification, the Nairobi action programme had not had the hoped for results. Much remained to be done, especially with respect to the mobilization of financial resources to support various initiatives at the institutional level. Moreover, the situation was getting worse as a result of the extreme drought affecting a large part of the continent. In Algeria, the fight against desertification had led to the establishment of a "green barrier" to restore and maintain the ecological balance of the land. His country's experience was reflected in the national report on desertification and drought it had submitted to the Intergovernmental Committee.

29. Desertification was a world-wide ecological phenomenon, like the ozone layer and climate change, which could not be reduced to the local level; for that reason, the convention on the subject could not be a secondary international instrument by comparison with the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. It should have the same status and receive as much attention as the international instruments signed at Rio. The terms of reference given to the Intergovernmental Committee under General Assembly resolution 47/188 should be strictly respected. Specific means of combating desertification should be laid down in a regional instrument annexed to the Convention and forming an integral part of it. In addition, legal instruments relating to other regions affected by desertification and drought should be negotiated after June 1994. Before the convention entered into force, provisional machinery should be established, the nucleus of which should be the Intergovernmental Committee and its secretariat. For that purpose, the General Assembly should adopt the principle of "quick beginning" so that the Committee, like the Committee on Climate Change, could continue to function during the provisional period in order to prepare the first conference of the Parties. The future convention should also contain specific provisions relating to institutional machinery, which should include a conference of the Parties, a group of officers, a support secretariat and subsidiary bodies including a scientific and technical council and an international centre for education and training with respect to desertification and drought. From that point of view, his delegation was deeply concerned at the direction the discussion at the second session of the Intergovernmental Committee had taken with respect to financial resources, when some countries had emphasized that only available financial resources should be used and discounted the possibility of obtaining additional resources. In the light of previous experience, especially what had happened to the Nairobi action programme because of the lack of adequate resources, the convention on desertification should give special importance to questions relating to financial resources and technology transfer. A special fund should be created for those purposes.

30. His delegation considered that the submission of reports by Member States during the preparatory process for the Rio Conference had been useful, and fully supported the use of the same method for the Intergovernmental Committee. If that were done, the national reports should be distributed by the Secretariat as working documents of the Committee. The Secretariat also needed the full support of the international community, for which it was essential that the Committee should be provided with budgetary resources. Governments should also

(Mr. Ahmia, Algeria)

increase their contributions to the Special Fund so that the developing countries could participate fully and effectively in the current negotiations. He hoped that the draft resolution approved by consensus by the Intergovernmental Committee at its last session would be transmitted to the General Assembly for approval without being subject to further negotiations.

31. His delegation renewed the offer made by Algeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs, on behalf of the Arab Maghreb Union, at the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly to act as host to a meeting of the officers of the Intergovernmental Committee in the Sahara, which was the largest desert in the world. It would also serve as host to a meeting of experts at Algiers at the beginning of January 1994, with a view to contributing to the adequate preparation of the third substantive session of the Intergovernmental Committee.

32. Mr. SHIBATA (Japan) expressed satisfaction at the progress made in implementing the commitments made at UNCED, including the progress made towards completing negotiations on an international convention to combat desertification by June 1994, as well as toward convening the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States in April 1994 and the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stock and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, as well as the progress made in the implementation and ratification of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the early coming into effect of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

33. Japan had identified five priorities for international cooperation in devising an integrated approach to environment and development. The first was development of the international legal framework for the preservation of the global environment. Mention should be made of Japan's early ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity, and its determination to contribute to the successful conclusion of the negotiations for an international convention to combat desertification. Secondly, Japan was committed to increasing its environment-related official development assistance. At the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Japan had announced that such assistance would range from 900 billion to 1 trillion yen in the five-year period beginning in April 1992; of that amount, almost one fourth had already been disbursed in fiscal year 1992. In that same context, Japan had pledged to provide grant aid in the amount of $250 million to $300 million over the next three years to develop underground water resources and water supplies in sub-Saharan Africa. Thirdly, Japan attached great importance to enhancing the capacity of developing countries to deal with environmental problems through the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and expertise. Japan was carrying out that transfer of technology to developing countries through the UNEP international environmental technology centres that had been established in Japan in the previous year. Fourthly, Japan had contributed to the development of financial mechanisms in that area, especially the Global Environment Facility, and would participate actively in the ongoing negotiations concerning ways and means of strengthening and reforming that important institution. Lastly, Japan would participate in the effort to transform lifestyles, which must be approached at the national and international levels, and had already

(Mr. Shibata, Japan)

begun to do so through the enactment of a comprehensive and ambitious basic law on the environment.

34. In the context of those priorities, Japan attached great importance to the conclusion of a convention to combat desertification that would meet the real needs of affected countries, as the causes of the problem were not only environmental, but also social and economic. While the issue was of global dimensions, special attention should be given to the situation of Africa. Japan supported the decision of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee to recommend that the General Assembly extend its mandate until January 1995; however, it emphasized the importance of the convention being finalized during the Committee's three remaining negotiating sessions.

35. Japan welcomed the progress made by the Preparatory Committee for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. However, as much remained to be done, it supported the proposal to convene a resumed session of that Committee in early 1994. Japan was planning to contribute $100,000 to the fund established to ensure full participation in the Conference.

36. Japan, which had always been dependent on marine resources, was acutely aware of the danger of overexploitation of fisheries and the degradation of marine habitats around the world, and of the pressing need for conservation and management measures, especially for straddling and highly migratory fish stocks. Japan intended to make a constructive contribution to the success of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, and believed that its outcome should be consistent with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, should maintain a balance between the rights and duties of States, and should address the basic issue of how conservation and management measures might be placed on an equal footing. Japan welcomed the significant progress made at the previous session of the Conference and endorsed the adoption of a resolution on the convening of two further sessions of the Conference in March and August 1994.

37. Japan believed that the sustainable development of human settlements was essential to the well-being of the international community and attached great importance to the projects of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). However, the increase in the number of projects in response to the growing array of problems in that area had reduced the effectiveness of those activities. While Japan would participate in a positive manner in the preparatory process for Habitat II, it would continue to consider ways of enabling Habitat to carry out its projects in a more transparent, effective and professional manner while still operating within its original mandate. The results of those studies would be released, as a contribution to the process of reforming all the organizations of the United Nations system which were active in the economic and social fields, by the next session of the Commission on Human Settlements, at the latest.

38. While international cooperation and support were needed if sustainable development was to become a reality, the main responsibility must be shouldered

(Mr. Shibata, Japan)

at the national level. In that context, it should be noted that his Government had drafted a national action plan to implement Agenda 21, which it intended to finalize by the end of the year.

39. Mr. ESTRADA OYUELA (Argentina) emphasized that the principles endorsed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development constituted progress as compared with those embodied in the Stockholm Declaration of 1972 and the United Nations World Charter for Nature of 1982. They included the recognition that human beings were at the centre of environmental concerns; the principle of common, but varying, responsibility; and the concept of sustainable development, which constituted significant progress as compared with the old notion of ecodevelopment. Those principles were permeating all international activities and were making it clear that there was a need to change the models of production and consumption; the developed countries had pledged to take the initiative in that endeavour.

40. In order for the developing countries to participate in that effort, the developed countries must provide financial and technological resources to those countries which did not yet have them, and must put an end to such practices as wasteful consumption and subsidies for the exhaustive use of natural resources. Those practices distorted market conditions, so that some countries stopped producing food, while others were forced to exert irrational pressure on their natural resources in order to maintain profit margins. Argentina's interest in problems relating to desertification stemmed from those factors. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification should conclude an agreement which took into account the needs of various regions.

41. Argentina had a special interest in the topics which had been considered at the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Argentina had proposed at that Conference that the provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, from which many of the proposals contained in Agenda 21 had been derived, should be supplemented by a specific regime in that area which could enter into force in the shortest possible time.

42. A number of the processes begun at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development were continuing. The preparations for the Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which met the needs of a group of countries that required special support, would last longer than originally planned. The Commission on Sustainable Development had the weighty responsibility of monitoring the implementation of Agenda 21. At the Commission's first meeting, the ministers had managed to avoid repetitive discussions and had adopted what had been called a "debureaucratized" approach. Another outcome of that meeting was the preparation of communications by Governments - which Argentina had already begun - on the implementation of Agenda 21. One of the themes that had been included in the Commission's programme of work was hazardous wastes, which should be considered in the context of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, which many developed countries had not yet

(Mr. Estrada Oyuela, Argentina)

ratified. In the field of human settlements and dangerous chemicals, Habitat and UNEP would have an opportunity to make very important contributions.

43. Agenda 21 and the legal instruments that had been signed at Rio de Janeiro had established the guidelines for the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The system emerging from the negotiations on the restructuring of GEF did not meet all the requirements of Agenda 21 and negotiations on the replenishment of the Facility had serious limitations. The Commission on Sustainable Development and the treaty bodies should assess the progress that had been achieved.

44. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea would enter into force in less than a year and would have a positive impact on the protection of the sea and its living and mineral resources. The Convention on Biological Diversity, which Argentina would soon ratify, would enter into force before the end of the year. The Framework Convention on Climate Change had already been ratified by 42 States out of the 50 required for its entry into force, and Argentina would ratify it within a few weeks. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Convention had made progress in various fields, in particular in the methodology for compiling inventories of greenhouse gases, which would be submitted by the developed countries. That information, together with the global evaluation that would be conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) would make it possible to assess that phenomenon for the first time within the framework of a binding commitment. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee had decided that the First Conference of the Parties would be held in Berlin in March 1995. In that regard, the Group of 77 and China would submit a draft resolution on the subject in due course. The First Conference of the Parties would include in its programme of work the consideration of information submitted by the developed countries and would decide whether the commitment to reduce emissions to their 1990 level by the year 2000 was sufficient for achieving the objective of the Convention. The scientific, technical and financial complexity of the activities specified in the Intergovernmental Committee's mandate posed serious problems, since the Intergovernmental Committee had only an interim secretariat whose staff was the same as it had been during the negotiating stage, even though the nature of the Intergovernmental Committee's new tasks was very different. He hoped that the necessary steps would be taken to improve the Intergovernmental Committee's working conditions.

45. Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakhstan) said that the prospects for a better world, with political stability and sustainable socio-economic development, was inconceivable unless environmental problems were addressed at the national, regional and global levels, and a comprehensive and integrated approach was needed to solve those problems. The international community had expressed its concerns about environmental issues at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, and had reaffirmed those concerns at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and in its support for the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. As the United Nations became more involved in the solution of environmental problems, the responsibilities of UNEP, the principal body in the United Nations system for environmental matters, would increase.

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

46. Referring to Kazakhstan's environmental problems, she noted that the rapidly shrinking Aral Sea had had harmful effects on the region's ecological balance. Salts and chemicals blown by winds from the seabed caused the thawing of centuries-old glaciers of the Pamir Mountains in Tajikistan. Moreover, 35 million people living in regions of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan had been forced to change their way of life, which for generations had been based on fishing and navigation. Ways of solving the crisis were being addressed directly by the Central Asian heads of State, who had set up a Council of Heads of States of the region; the Council had already held two sessions to deal with the problem. However, without the assistance of the international community, the Central Asian republics would not be able to rehabilitate the region. Her delegation therefore invited international organizations and individual States to contribute to the elimination of the disaster by participating in the Aral Sea programmes and funds, in particular the International Fund to Save the Aral Sea, which had been established in 1993 by Kazakhstan and the Central Asian republics, and to consider the note verbale of 15 September 1993 that had been circulated among the Member States; in that note verbale, Kazakhstan proposed that the United Nations should convene a special conference on the problem.

47. Another major environmental issue was the aftermath of the 466 nuclear tests that had been conducted at the Semipalatinsk test site from 1949 to 1989. The tests had been carried out without any precautionary or safety measures for the local population. Many future generations would suffer the consequences of that disaster, and Kazakhstan once again called upon the international community to provide assistance to mitigate the problem.

48. In 1979, the water level of the Caspian Sea had begun to rise and adjacent territories had been flooded, which had endangered human settlements and economic activities in the area. Moreover, the intensive use of the Caspian Sea and its basin endangered the flora and fauna and the ecological balance of the entire region. Concerned by environmental deterioration in the region, the heads of State of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, the Russian Federation and Turkmenistan had met in Astrakhan in October 1993 to agree on joint efforts to deal with the whole range of environmental problems of the Caspian Sea and establish a working group to elaborate an agreed package of measures to preserve the biological resources of the Caspian Sea and control its water level.

49. With regard to global environmental issues, her delegation agreed with the observation made at the last session of the UNEP Governing Council that it was difficult to draw a line between natural and man-made environmental disasters. For that reason, Kazakhstan welcomed the intention of UNEP to play a greater coordinating role in environmental matters within the United Nations system, and commended the recommendation of the last session of the Governing Council for greater involvement in the implementation of Agenda 21 and, in particular, the restructured Global Environment Facility. Her delegation also noted with satisfaction the recommendation to extend the experimental phase of the United Nations Centre for Urgent Environmental Assistance and enhance its operational links with potential partners within the United Nations system, in particular the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in order to make the best use of the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to emergency situations in an

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

integrated way and improve its relations with donor countries and affected States.

50. While commending the work that had been accomplished by UNEP, her delegation considered that the Programme should turn to all regions of the world, including ones like Central Asia, which had only very recently acquired independent representation in the United Nations. In that regard, decisions such as Governing Council decision 17/27, on action for countries with economies in transition, should focus not only on European but also Asian countries in transition. Her delegation invited the Executive Director to take measures to ensure the greater involvement of the Programme's regional offices for Western Asia and for Asia and the Pacific, in close collaboration with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and other international organizations, in the search for optimum ways of addressing the urgent environmental needs of Asian countries with economies in transition.

51. Mr. MALLYA (United Republic of Tanzania) welcomed the results of the first substantive session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which had adopted a thematic programme of work for the Commission until 1997. The work of the Commission must reflect a commitment to integrate environment and development, taking full account of the principles set forth in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. His delegation fully supported the view that the Commission should take a leading role in addressing the issues referred to it and hoped that financial resources would not continue to be a major obstacle to the effective implementation of Agenda 21. There was a need for collaboration in the area of the transfer of environmentally sound technology. His country was in the process of preparing a national report following the guidelines set by the secretariat of the Commission and it hoped to receive assistance in defining some of the guidelines which would enable it to involve local communities in the work. It also hoped that developing countries would be given assistance so that they could participate fully in inter-sessional meetings of the Commission. In 1994 the United Republic of Tanzania would become a member of the Commission on Sustainable Development for a three-year term and it intended to participate actively in its work. It believed, however, that as far as sustainable development was concerned, States should have recourse to other intergovernmental forums, too, so as to come to an understanding on how they would shape a common future.

52. He commended the work and achievements of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification and said he was fully satisfied with the progress of the negotiations. In that connection, he said he hoped that the Convention, together with an instrument for Africa, would be finalized by June 1994. He also supported the draft resolution which would extend the mandate of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee until January 1995, and hoped that it would be promptly adopted by the General Assembly.

53. With regard to the protection of the marine environment and the convening of a United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, his delegation reiterated that the existing regional arrangements,

(Mr. Mallya, United Republic of Tanzania)

such as the Organization for Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation (IOMAC), could serve as a basis for enhancing such international cooperation in the sustainable harvesting of marine resources, and it supported the resolution whereby two further sessions of the aforementioned United Nations Conference would be convened in March and August 1994.

54. The issues to be addressed by the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States were of great interest because of the challenges presented by the planning and implementation of sustainable development policies for those countries. In that respect, his delegation supported the proposal by the Alliance of Small Island States for a one-week resumed session of the Preparatory Committee to address outstanding issues.

55. His delegation was pleased that, at its seventeenth session, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had reiterated its understanding of the catalytic role of UNEP in its sphere of competence and that it was expected to expand its mandate to other areas, such as environmental economics, natural resources accounting, environmental indicators and the development of a United Nations system approach to environmental impact assessment.

56. On the question of human settlements, his country expected to implement the recommendations of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the year 2000 by implementing national programmes aimed at the achievement of its shelter targets. Moreover, in view of the fact that the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and UNEP had two distinct mandates and in the light of the challenges stemming from the Global Strategy, his delegation considered it essential and fully justified that an Executive Director of Habitat should be appointed without further delay.

57. Mr. McKINNON (New Zealand), speaking also on behalf of the nine members of the South Pacific Forum, said, with regard to the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, that the elaboration of a strong programme of action was crucial to the survival of those countries. The members of the South Pacific Forum also attached great importance to the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks, since fish and the sea were a vital part of their cultural heritage as well as a staple part of their diet and their economy respectively, in other words, resources which they had a duty to conserve and manage responsibly for the benefit of current and future generations.

58. The countries of the South Pacific Forum believed that the substantive debate on questions relating to small island States and marine resources should take place, at the respective Conferences which were to be held shortly and that the General Assembly at its current session should adopt the relevant procedural resolutions.

(Mr. McKinnon, New Zealand)

59. As to taking stock of the progress made towards the complete cessation of large-scale pelagic drift-net fishing on the high seas, under resolution 46/215 of 20 December 1991, he said that the South Pacific Forum had played a prominent role in drawing attention to the adverse impact of that irresponsible fishing practice on living marine resources. In the South Pacific such practices had been relegated to past history, since in the previous year no allegations of that kind had been made. He reiterated the South Pacific Forum's recent call for all the relevant countries to sign without delay the Convention for the Prohibition of Fishing with Long Drift-nets in the South Pacific and its protocols. The Secretary-General's report (A/48/451 and Corr.1) contained a review of the action taken by many States to implement the global moratorium on drift-net fishing. The members of the South Pacific Forum appreciated the significant measures taken in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly by Japan and the Republic of Korea. However, the members of the South Pacific Forum were deeply concerned about reports of activities in other regions of the world - for example, drift-net fishing in the Mediterranean and the North Atlantic - and hoped that the competent authorities in the countries concerned would take early and firm action to prevent any further such incidents and would inform the Secretary-General of the measures they had taken. A failure to implement the moratorium in any region of the world would not only serve to undermine the moratoria in other regions, it would also constitute a direct challenge to the authority of the Second Committee to take effective decisions on environment and development issues. Accordingly, the importance of full compliance with the global moratorium by all members of the international community should be strongly reaffirmed by the Committee at its current session. The members of the South Pacific Forum hoped that Governments and organizations would do their best to provide the Secretary-General with all relevant information with a view to the preparation of the 1994 report. They further hoped that the 1994 report would describe the action taken by States in every region of the world to ensure that the irresponsible practice in question was relegated to history.

60. Mr. NOMMANN (Estonia) said that he disagreed that countries with economies in transition were developed enough to take care of their environmental problems by themselves. Such countries were not developed but "misdeveloped", and could not go back to the point where they had been wrong and start again on the right path. After 50 years of "misdevelopment", Estonia required a large input of resources. The harm to the environment caused by a "misdeveloped" economy was not local but global in scope. Scarcity of resources today in the world made innovative financing strategies a top-priority theme in the upcoming intergovernmental negotiations.

61. Estonia had studied the Rio documents and had defined its priorities in order to formulate its national plan of action. It was also getting ready to ratify the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. Informed decisions must, however, be based on adequate information; for the present, information flowed mainly in one direction - in other words, from individual countries to the Commission on Development. Although all Member States were considered equal, small States did not have equality in their access to information. A reverse flow of information in a

(Mr. Nommann, Estonia)

pre-analysed, concentrated form would considerably facilitate the decision-making process and accelerate the ratification of conventions.

62. The contemporary world consisted mainly of small countries whose borders did not delimit ecosystems. In general, ecosystems covered territories under the jurisdiction of several countries, and such situations gave rise to the problem of how to achieve coordination and agreement among several jurisdictional entities that affected the same ecosystem. The incorporation of ecosystem-based criteria into international conventions should become standard in international environmental law. In practice, such an approach could mean that Member States relinquished a small part of their sovereignty to a regional international organization, which thereafter could become a party to multilateral agreements.

63. With regard to the restructuring of the Global Environment Facility (GEF), Estonia hoped that the Nordic project would be implemented so as to create a good balance between universal participation and effective decision-making. It trusted that the constituency formation for the GEF Council would faithfully reflect the structure of today's world and be based on a regional approach, and that the restructuring and replenishment negotiations would yield successful results.

64. The multidisciplinary nature of follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development required an integrated approach to coordination, both in policy-making and in programme implementation in the United Nations system; the Commission on Sustainable Development could assist the Economic and Social Council in the area of system-wide coordination. Positive experience from the GEF negotiations would also be useful in the process of reforming the Council. The United Nations system's network of resident coordinators could play a more active role in coordinating international support for national activities. Adequate support should be provided for the elaboration of sustainable development strategies at the national level, as recommended at Rio; that process should take into account ongoing activities related to national environmental plans and strategies to achieve complementarity and coherence of efforts.

65. Estonia, which was actively engaged in high-seas fishing, welcomed the fact that there was general agreement among Member States on the need to establish appropriate conservation and management measures as a way to promote long-term sustainability of fish resources. It called on all concerned Member States to strive to reach political agreement that the ecosystem approach was a non-negotiable framework for all fisheries management activities, and that the same management principles should be applied everywhere, including on both sides of the borders of exclusive economic zones.

66. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Population and Development to be held in Cairo he said that a financial mechanism like GEF could be established for the implementation of the Agenda for Development.

67. Mr. RYKHLYA (Belarus) expressed his country's support for the commitments entered into at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and for the activities and initiatives undertaken by the United Nations to carry them out. Like other countries with economies in transition, Belarus was facing a difficult economic situation, an energy crisis and worsening social problems such as increases in unemployment and emigration. Some of those problems were the result of the reconversion of its military industry, the fulfilment of its commitments in the areas of arms reduction and dismantling of nuclear weapons facilities and the situations inherited from the past, such as the Chernobyl tragedy. It was therefore difficult for Belarus fully to implement the decisions and recommendations of the Conference, and it therefore needed external assistance. Belarus was interested in learning about the experiences of other Member States in connection with that problem.

68. Belarus, which was improving its national legislation in the environmental field, had already ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity and was considering ratifying the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. It was very interested in contributing to United Nations activities in the economic, social and environmental fields on the basis of the principles set forth in the joint declaration on the environment issued by the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Azerbaijan, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova.

69. It was necessary to achieve a better balance between the interests of the various groups of countries, including the small island States and the developing countries, especially in Africa. In that connection, Belarus supported the negotiations of a convention to combat desertification and the preparations for the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, and stressed that the economic interests of the countries with economies in transition should be taken into account. Taking the Conference on Environment and Development as a point of departure, multilateral negotiations should begin with a view to preparing for a world convention on the protection of forests and forest rehabilitation aimed at protecting all types of forests, not only tropical forests.

70. Belarus was also interested in knowing what impact reforms in United Nations activities connected with sustainable development and coordination would have. In that connection, it should be noted that the Commission on Sustainable Development should become the lead body for the implementation of Agenda 21 and that duplication of efforts and competition for resources - between UNEP and the Commission, for example - must be avoided. Belarus believed that discussions should be held on how to change the UNEP Governing Council from a policy-making organ into an action-oriented body with more precise functions and how to give UNEP more resources in order to enable it to provide technical assistance. In that context, he expressed support for the measures being taken by the Executive Director of UNEP in connection with the reform of the organization. Belarus also wished to see the disagreements between the World Bank, UNDP and UNEP over GEF resolved.

71. Starting at the following session of the General Assembly, in connection with the agenda item on environment and development, issues relating to the

(Mr. Rykhlya, Belarus)

protection of the world environment for present and future generations should be studied every other year. There should also be a yearly analysis of the status of implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, whose interdisciplinary aspects might be better analysed through the preparation of new strategies, programmes, plans and recommendations by the principal and subsidiary organs of the United Nations. On that point, Belarus had cooperated with other Member States to ensure that the basic principles of sustainable development were taken into account in the draft decisions and recommendations of such bodies as the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the Conference on Disarmament.

72. Some issues still needed to be resolved in connection with the Commission on Sustainable Development, such as the venue of future sessions. In Belarus' view, the next meeting should take place at Geneva. The information that Governments were expected to submit to the Commission should be provided in a format that was flexible and took national and subregional features into account. Finally, the Commission's annual reports should contain a chapter on environmental problems in the countries with economies in transition.

73. Mr. KARSLIOGLU (Turkey) welcomed the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the holding of its first substantive session and the adoption of its agenda as major steps forward in the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of the Conference on Environment and Development. The Global Environment Facility (GEF) would be one of the primary vehicles for carrying out the activities called for in Agenda 21 that had yet to be undertaken, and Turkey hoped that the next discussion on reforming GEF would increase the effectiveness of that financing arrangement.

74. Turkey, which was itself affected by desertification and land degradation, gave high priority to solving those problems and was pleased with the outcome of the two meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the Elaboration of an International Convention to Combat Desertification.

75. Turning to human settlements, an issue of great importance for the international community, he said that Turkey took great pride in hosting Habitat II, to be held in June 1996 in Istanbul. To ensure the success of the Conference, the Turkish National Committee for Habitat II, which included three subcommittees dealing with various aspects of the event, had been established under the auspices of the President of the Republic. By the end of the century the vast majority of the planet's population would be living in urban settlements. The growth rate of the urban population in the developing world was 3.8 per cent, as compared with only 1 per cent in the developed world. It was necessary to develop policies to deal with and slow down that trend.

76. More than a quarter of urban dwellers in the developing world lived in absolute poverty. Unemployment, homelessness, illiteracy, worsening health conditions, disintegration of the social fabric, psychological problems and crime were the outcome of deteriorating living conditions and continuing social conflicts. A sustainable development policy could not be pursued without

(Mr. Karslioglu, Turkey)

tackling such fundamental problems, whose solution lay in working out support strategies for effective development, with close cooperation among the political, economic and social sectors. In that connection, the participation of non-governmental organizations, local authorities, women's organizations, businesses and individuals was crucial. Through democratization, decentralization and liberalization, sustainable strategies could be formulated and implemented.

77. Turkey welcomed the plan of action of the secretariat of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements for the preparatory process for Habitat II, which should not be just one more conference of experts but rather should involve the various sectors of society both in the preparatory process and in the Conference itself.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.